

School Committee Finance Subcommittee

Monday, March 28, 2016

8:30 AM – 10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room, Town Hall

Finance Subcommittee members present: Ms. Stram (Chairman), Mr. Chang, Ms. Charlupski, and Mr. Pollak.

Other School Committee members present: Ms. Ditkoff, Ms. Scotto, and Ms. Stone.

Staff present: Dr. Connelly, Dr. Fischer-Mueller, Dr. Shmukler, Ms. Dunn, Mr. Lummis, Mr. D'Onofrio, and Ms. Coyne.

Others present: Advisory Committee members Michael Sandman, Jennifer Goldsmith, Bobbie Knable, Shaari Mittel, and Mariah Nobrega.

1) Approve Minutes of the March 14, 2016 Finance Subcommittee Meeting

On a motion of Ms. Charlupski and seconded by Mr. Pollak, the Finance Subcommittee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2016 Finance Subcommittee meeting.

2) Review and Possible Vote on the FY 2017 Budget

Ms. Dunn explained the changes in Draft #2 of the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2017 Budget (Attachment A), which include an expanded introduction, reorganization, and additional information on Circuit Breaker, special education projections, and hiring.

The Committee discussed the chart on reserves on page 14. The proposed budget includes funding for three unallocated special education positions and a \$518,399 special education contingency reserve for unforeseen staffing and/or tuition needs. School Committee members asked that the text clarify which reserves were eliminated (e.g., summer school, grant, supply/capital) and which were moved to other line items. The system will accrue savings through staff churn that can be used to fund shortfalls. Committee members asked that the text be clear where we have already made a policy choice to maintain certain programs such as METCO and full-day kindergarten.

Dr. Shmukler provided an update on out-of-district tuition projections. There are currently 49 out-of-district students, which is quite low. The figure of 55 includes Norfolk Agricultural and Minuteman students (the Finance Subcommittee will need to discuss how these costs are budgeted). Over the past five years we expanded and enhanced in-house programs, improving service and reducing out-of-district tuition costs. Our FY 2017 tuition projections are quite conservative. Our reserves have covered unilateral placements and move-ins. With enrollment increases and the rise in students with complex needs, the numbers may start to shift upwards. FY 2018 will be challenging because we are using one-time funds in FY 2017. Our ability to hire and retain highly skilled paraprofessionals has been challenging. The Committee requested a deeper dive into special education at an upcoming School Committee meeting.

School Committee members asked whether there is need to expand the RISE Program and noted that we don't want to back in to bad pedagogical decisions because of space

limitations. The capital costs might actually be less than the cost of additional out-of-district placements. Dr. Shmukler stated that rather than expanding at Runkle or another school, we might want to consider inclusion step-down programs in North and South Brookline. Mr. Pollak asked that Ms. Dunn bring this issue back to the Capital Improvement Subcommittee for further discussion.

There are no program reviews scheduled for FY 2017 and hence no funds budgeted for this purpose. Teaching and Learning has some funding to respond to Curriculum Coordinator requests. The page 3 statement on instructional supplies doesn't seem to be consistent with the budget. Committee members asked about reserves for materials and furniture. Devotion furniture will get reused. We will try to find a less expensive furniture vendor. Ms. Dunn will make sure that the page 14 chart is consistent with the budget narrative. In response to a question, Dr. Connelly stated that sometimes teachers request items from parents that the district could provide. In response to a question, Dr. Fischer-Mueller stated that the library book budget was level funded. The school allocations are based on enrollment.

Advisory Committee members had several comments/questions (impact of legal challenges to placement decisions; requested additional information on enrollment projection implications for the future; the School Within a School (SWS) budget went up 8%, while other high school programs, some that serve increasing numbers of students, were held level; importance of device equity). Ms. Ditzoff asked that the budget narrative clarify that the additional cost for SWS is approximately \$100,000.

In response to a question regarding the implications of the proposed budget, Ms. Dunn stated that the district will be carefully monitoring requests for new personnel. Dr. Fischer-Mueller stated that implementation of some practices may be delayed. Committee members requested a list that shows ways in which we will have to delay implementation of the strategic plan because of enrollment growth and funding limitations. Dr. Shmukler noted reductions in consultation and contracted services.

The Committee asked for a breakout of expenditures on educational equity, both student and adult focused. Dr. Fischer-Mueller stated that she could provide this for targeted interventions, such as the African American Latino Scholars Program. It would be more difficult to pull out the opportunities that are dispersed throughout the budget. Ms. Dunn suggested that the FY 2018 budget narrative highlight which funds are used to promote equity.

On a motion of Mr. Chang and seconded by Mr. Pollak, the Finance Subcommittee voted unanimously to recommend that the School Committee vote to recommend the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2017 Budget.

Mr. Sandman provided an update on upcoming Advisory Committee meetings. The School Subcommittee will provide a preview of the school budget on March 31, 2016 (no School representation needed); the school budget will be presented to the Advisory

Committee on April 12, 2016 (would like school representation). The Advisory Committee may vote that evening.

Members had a few comments/suggestions regarding the narrative (Budget Guidelines fall come under the Enrollment Summary; introductory language; pull out the libraries from the technology budget; update the Powerpoint presentation before the Budget Forums; include diversity information as an appendix). Ms. Dunn suggested including a summary of the March 10, 2016 presentation on educational equity. Members should send additional comments to Ms. Stram and Ms. Dunn as soon as possible.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM.